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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 9189
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JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: OPRC KMDR TU
SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2008

In Today's Papers

More Revelations in Deniz Feneri Scandal

Many media outlets continue reporting about the Islamist-oriented Deniz Feneri charity scandal in Germany, which was dubbed "fraud of the century" by the German authorities. In a news conference Monday, opposition CHP deputy group chief Kemal Kilicdaroglu showed to the press a document authorizing Kanal 7 TV president Zekeriya Karaman to handle Kanal 7 TV Europe manager Mehmet Gurhan's assets and investments in Turkey. The document was issued by a notary public in Istanbul on May 21, 2007 -- on a date Gurhan was in prison in Germany. The document authorizes Karaman to make transactions with the Gurhan's shares in Turkish companies. Liberal Radikal says it is clear that Karaman was taking care of Gurhan's commercial interests in Turkey. "The document shows Gurhan was a puppet and that Karaman was holding the whole power and authority," Kilicdaroglu stressed.

On Monday, Turkey's media watchdog RTUK Chair Zahid Akman in an interview on NTV rejected charges that he played a key role in the Deniz Feneri scandal. Akman said there was no need for his resignation because all the charges against him were "speculation." "The Prime Minister said I should continue with my duties at RTUK," Akman said. Akman claimed the campaign launched against him was actually "plotted by foreign intelligence services." Mainstream Milliyet says Akman occupied positions in four different companies after being assigned to RTUK, even though this is clearly prohibited by laws. Meanwhile, opposition far right MHP leader Devlet Bahceli released yesterday a statement demanding RTUK President Akman be "forced to step down." MHP deputy group chief Oktay Vural said his party would submit a motion to parliament for initiating parliamentary investigation into the Deniz Feneri scandal.

Rice-Babacan Meet in New York

Media outlets report that on Monday, Foreign Minister Ali Babacan met Secretary Rice on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meetings in New York. Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) Spokesman Burak Ozugergin said Babacan and Rice discussed "Turkey-U.S. ties, cooperation against the PKK and recent developments in the Caucasus." "Babacan and Rice also discussed President Abdullah

Gul's visit to Armenia," Ozugergin said. Papers report Rice emphasized Turkey was an "excellent partner." On a question whether Turkey backed the US in the Georgia-Russia crisis, Rice said "We have discussed the matter with Turkey a couple times because Turkey is an important power in the Caucasus and is working for a more peaceful Caucasus".

Erdogan: "Economic Crisis Could be an Opportunity for Turkey
Hurriyet, Sabah, Vatan, Turkiye, Yeni Safak, Zaman, Dunya, Posta:
Today's papers extensively covered the press conference PM Erdogan held on recent economic developments in the world. Finance Minister Kemal Unakitan, State Ministers Nazim Ekren and Kursad Tuzmen joined the Prime Minister at the press conference. Mainstream Sabah and Islamist-oriented Zaman headline "Erdogan Relays Confidence Messages to Markets" and report Erdogan saying "The world's financial sector is going through a serious crisis. Turkey will get over this crisis with minimum damage and walk towards its targets with determination.

I believe this process will turn into an opportunity for Turkey." Mainstream Hurriyet quotes Erdogan as saying "The structural reforms carried out in the last six years have helped Turkey to minimize the effects of national and international crises. Turkey is not as vulnerable to crisis and turmoil as it was in the past."

Editorial Commentary on Global Economic Meltdown

Mehmet Barlas wrote in mainstream Sabah: "Pluralistic democracy is the guarantor of economic stability. If there is no political stability and transparency in a country, then there will be no economic stability either. Getting deeply involved in domestic issues and angry polemics can threaten Turkey's relationship with

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the EU. This situation can affect Turkey's economy dramatically.

Hasan Cemal wrote in mainstream Milliyet: The recent global economic crisis reminded me of the economic crisis Turkey faced in 2001. The damages of the recent global crisis are really big. As a result, growth in the western economies will slow down and maybe completely stop. Unemployment will spread. International capital issues will cease. While there are such crises in the world, I really don't know what measures PM Erdogan is taking against it. But one thing is definite: Turkey will be affected by this global crisis. In order to avoid huge damage, Erdogan should pay more attention to the global economic crisis and to EU reforms.

DTP Rally in Diyarbakir and Van for Kurdish Language Education
Mainstream Milliyet reports that a rally arranged by DTP activists in Diyarbakir and Van to demand Kurdish language education in state schools turned to a pro-PKK rally. While Kurdish language songs praising the PKK and jailed leader Ocalan were broadcast from the DTP's official bus, primary school students attended the rally and chanted pro-PKK slogans. Around 10,000 people attended the rally, including DTP chairman Ahmet Turk, DTP deputies Emine Ayna, Selahattin Demirtas, former DEP chairperson Leyla Zana and Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir. Leyla Zana addressed the crowd in Kurdish and urged them to speak in Kurdish among the families, to read Kurdish papers, to watch Kurdish TV channels and to follow Kurdish internet sites.

Editorial Commentary on Turkey/Pluralism

Ihsan Dagi in Islamist-oriented Zaman: "Racists in Europe have tried to block the construction of a mosque in Cologne. European democrats disrupted their effort, and formed a 'rainbow' platform on the side of Muslims. In this platform were church representatives, democrats, liberals, greens and even gays. We have to take a lesson from this, and rediscover the tradition of tolerance and coexistence with people from diverse faiths. An understanding of a homogenous religion, just like a mentality of a homogenous nation and state, will take a society to fascism. It's odd that our tradition, which has seen Muslims, Christians and Jews existing together, is today displaying a destructive homogenous approach. Those who try to put pressure on people coming from different faiths cannot object to the homogenizing politics of the Kemalist regime. The mentality is the same -- everyone else should be like us; and whether this is seen as 'everyone should be Kemalist and secularist' or 'everyone should be

Muslim' doesn't make a difference. We must admit that Turkey has lost its cultural pluralism. This land is homogenous to an extent never seen in its history. But they are still afraid, which means that 'uniformity' doesn't relieve our fears, on the contrary, those we have turned towards 'uniformity' return as our nightmares."

TV News:
CNN Turk

Domestic News

- The Health Ministry has launched an investigation into the death of 13 premature babies in a hospital in Izmir.
- A government decree authorizing cross-border incursions into northern Iraq for one more year has been sent to parliament for approval.
- A report by Turkish Parliament's Human Rights Committee says about widespread wiretapping fears in Turkey that it was not possible to bug everyone because of technical and legal reasons.

International News

- President Abdullah Gul began official meetings in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meetings.

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- Russian warships sail for Venezuela for joint exercises in November.
- More than 1000 artifacts looted from Iraqi sites and museums in 2003 have been returned to Iraq.

WILSON